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PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY DEVOTED TO DISARMAMENT

Third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 1 September 1977 at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. ORTIZ de ROZAS (Argentina)

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Organization of work

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The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK OF THE SPECIAL SESSION (continued)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to Conference Room Paper No. 8, which contained the record of recommendations of the Committee to the General Assembly and had been prepared at the suggestion of the representative of the United States. Under item 1 (e) of that document, reference was made to the President of the special session as one of the members of the General Committee. The special session would elect its President, and, in that connexion, he wished to inform the Committee that the seventh special session had elected as its President the President of the previous regular session of the General Assembly. The same had been true of the third, fourth, fifth and sixth special sessions. In view of the qualities of the candidate proposed as President of the thirty-second regular session, he believed that the special session would follow the precedent that had been set and elect that person as its President.

2. Mr. HAMILTON (Sweden), introducing document A/AC.187/80, said that one of the issues which had been given a prominent place in the replies of most Governments to the Secretary-General regarding the special session was that of the enormous resources devoted to armaments and the relationship between disarmament efforts and measures to achieve economic and social progress. Those resources were urgently needed to meet the demands of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries. At the second session of the Committee, a number of delegations had expressed considerable interest in a continuation of the earlier United Nations efforts to shed light on those matters. Recent assessments indicated that resources devoted to armaments were larger than had previously been estimated. At the same time, United Nations studies and other reports confirmed the distressing situation regarding world poverty. Furthermore, problems resulting from under-development and world economic crises affected both industrialized and developing countries. It was against that general background that the delegations of Norway and Sweden and the observer delegations of Denmark and Finland had decided to submit working paper A/AC.187/80. Those Governments had come to the conclusion that the role of military expenditures in the world economy and the conditions for a successful redeployment of resources to civilian purposes must be further clarified in order to lay a solid foundation for the necessary political decisions.

3. Earlier studies had convincingly proved that a redeployment of military resources would bring about considerable advantages with respect to economic and social development. What was needed was a clarification of the matters relating to such a redeployment - the conditions for political decisions, the consequences with regard to employment and production, and the prerequisites for utilizing in the most efficient manner the reallocated resources.

4. The working paper contained a preliminary indication of the direction such an international study might take, and the sponsors hoped that the Committee in its report to the General Assembly would recommend such a study. The terms of reference for the study had to be further elaborated, and that could be done in

(Mr. Hamilton, Sweden)

the continuing preparatory work with a view to having the special session take a final decision on the matter. The proposal was based on the view that the study should be clearly oriented towards providing the groundwork for political decisions. It was an absolute prerequisite to know exactly what were the present conditions with respect to the utilization of manpower and material resources for military purposes and the extent to which those particular resources would be needed for purposes of civilian development. It would furthermore be necessary to consider the consequences of a continuing utilization of resources along current lines, the reallocation of the resources of the world economy and a restructuring of production.

5. Questions arose as to what would be the effects of continuing arms production with regard to economic development and the utilization of labour and what would be the effects on the utilization of natural resources. Those questions could be, and indeed largely had been, answered in a general way. However, in order to develop a realistic strategy for disarmament, the implications of alternative options had to be known. For example, the employment issue had been brought up in public debate as one of the most difficult problems to be solved within a programme for disarmament. On the one hand, it had been argued that the long-term effects of disarmament would increase possibilities for employment, while, on the other hand, the immediate repercussions of disarmament measures seemed to be more uncertain in that regard. Such questions had to be studied very carefully.

6. The proposed study should lead up to a detailed analysis of the conditions for a redeployment of resources that would be released from military use. An analysis of the demands of the civilian sector would be fundamental when considering alternative production. Once that was done, the factors decisive to the process of readjustment must be analysed in order to achieve the necessary co-ordination between disarmament measures and measures of economic policy directing the transition to civilian purposes.

7. It should be in the interest of all countries to find a way of redeploying national resources, now disproportionately devoted to military purposes, to more constructive ends. The goal of the proposed United Nations study was to provide the world with the necessary mechanisms to meet the political requirements of such a redeployment, including mechanisms for transferring resources to development efforts in the developing countries. That would dramatically alter the prospects for economic and social development and promote the ultimate realization of the goals of a new international economic order.

8. Mr. VAERNO (Norway) said that his Government attached particular importance to the disarmament/development issue and had actively engaged in co-operation with the other Nordic countries in an attempt to further clarify that relationship. Norway believed that the study proposed in document A/AC.187/80 would be a valuable contribution to the search for a new international economic order. It hoped that that proposal would receive the necessary support.

9. The fact that an increasing volume of resources was being used each year for military purposes in a world in which many people were unable to satisfy their basic needs represented an indisputable misuse of resources. It had been stated

(Mr. Vaerno, Norway)

that if merely the increase in military expenditures during the decade 1960-1970 had been used for development aid, that would have represented a quintupling of the official aid from rich countries. In addition to the financial outlays, the world's military sector as a whole claimed a large number of the best-qualified scientists and engineers. Some of that manpower should instead be mobilized with a view to solving some of the present-day world's most pressing problems.

10. The present decade had been declared not only a disarmament decade but also a development decade. It therefore seemed appropriate that a special session on disarmament should also examine the question of the relationship between armaments, resources and development. Furthermore, in resolution 3462 (XXX) the General Assembly had declared that the continuing arms race was not compatible with efforts aimed at establishing a new international economic order. It had also, in resolution 3470 (XXX), called upon Member States and the Secretary-General to intensify their efforts in support of the link between disarmament and development so as to promote disarmament negotiations and to ensure that the human and material resources freed by disarmament were used to promote economic and social development, particularly in the developing countries. In order to move in that direction, efforts should be made to achieve concrete measures for the reallocation of resources from military to civilian purposes.

11. The relationship between armament/disarmament and development had already been the subject of other studies within the United Nations. The sponsors, however, felt that there was a need for an examination of the basic conditions for a successful redeployment of resources released as a result of disarmament measures. Such a study would help to achieve the goals of a new international economic order. The close relationship between the main problems facing the world - poverty and the arms race - should be clarified in a manner sufficiently elaborate to stimulate public debate and to serve as a basis for decisions on concrete action.

12. The fact that expenditures on armaments were still rising gave cause for serious anxiety. An uncontrolled military build-up constituted an obvious danger to international security and stability and to the survival of mankind itself. Millions of people throughout the world were suffering from poverty, and that situation could in large measure be relieved through a more reasonable redistribution of resources. It was in that context that the unacceptable misuse of resources which the military arms race represented should be viewed. The purpose of the Nordic proposal was to clarify the basic conditions for releasing resources now allocated to armaments in order to promote the realization of a new international economic order that would help to eliminate the present inequalities in the world community - inequalities which in themselves were an important source of tension and conflict.

13. The CHAIRMAN recalled that, at the 15th meeting, the Office of Public Information had been requested to provide clarifications of certain points in Conference Room Paper No. 3. OPI was now prepared to provide those clarifications.

14. Mr. GRIBKOV (Office of Public Information), drawing attention to Conference Room Paper No. 3/Add.1/Corr.1, said that OPI had, as requested, replaced the term "official languages" by "working languages". The phrase "several other languages" in item A.1 (b) referred to languages such as Portuguese, Japanese, Hindi, Swahili, Swedish and others. It was assumed that the brochure would be produced in those versions only if the Committee approved the allocations requested. The spelling of the word "Dari" had been corrected, and the word "Tagalog" would be replaced by "pilipino" as requested by the representative of the Philippines. OPI also assumed that funds would be available to produce the brochure in the German language.

15. Mr. WEILER (United States of America) asked for an explanation regarding the last sentence of the second paragraph in Conference Room Paper No. 3, which stated that a special effort was planned to present the 1977 Yearbook on Disarmament in time for the special session, although possibly not in printed form and in all languages. He wondered what the present schedule was regarding publication of the Yearbook.

16. Mr. BJORNERSTEDT (Assistant-Secretary-General, Centre for Disarmament) replied that the sentence had been included as a matter of caution. The Yearbook was being prepared for the first time, and while it was hoped that it would be published in time for the special session, it was still too early for the Secretariat to make a commitment that it would be available by 23 May 1978.

17. The CHAIRMAN said that, at a later stage, the Committee would again take up the question of the role to be played by OPI in information activities for the special session.

18. With regard to the role of non-governmental organizations, he drew the Committee's attention to Conference Room Paper No. 7, which would be discussed as soon as delegations had had sufficient time to study it.

19. The representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization had requested an opportunity to address the Committee in order to bring to its attention UNESCO's continuing role in the field of disarmament. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee agreed to give a hearing to the representative of UNESCO.

20. It was so decided.

21. Mr. MARKS (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that the links between development and disarmament had been recognized by UNESCO since the late 1940s and would no doubt be among its primary concerns as the special session gave impetus to efforts to achieve disarmament. From the time the General Assembly had begun considering the matter of general and complete

(Mr. Marks, UNESCO)

disarmament, UNESCO's executive organs had begun stressing the importance of that matter in UNESCO's programme. When the Secretary-General of the United Nations had implemented resolution 1516 (XV) and had entrusted to a group of expert consultants the preparation of a study on the economic and social consequences of disarmament, the General Conference of UNESCO, at its twelfth session, had drawn attention to the report of the Secretary-General transmitting the study and had endorsed the unanimous conclusion of the expert consultants. The same resolution had authorized the Director-General to inform the Secretary-General of his readiness to supply him with any information and studies within the competence of UNESCO.

22. Beginning with the seventeenth session of the General Conference, a new direction had been taken on the basis of promotion of the study of the positive consequences of disarmament in school and out-of-school education for young people and adults, the mobilization of public opinion in favour of disarmament through the use of the mass media, encouragement of the activities of non-governmental organizations to further the cause of disarmament, and research on the economic and social consequences and on the dangers to man and his environment inherent in modern armaments and techniques of warfare. Those new orientations in UNESCO's contribution to disarmament had been further developed, and the Director-General had been invited to make extensive use of UNESCO's communication and publication activities. Furthermore, at its eighteenth session the General Conference had for the first time in the organization's history adopted an intersectoral programme on human rights and peace, one of the main activities of which was to implement an interdisciplinary programme designed to promote education and information with regard to the disarmament problem.

23. UNESCO's activities continued to reflect the basic approach suggested by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his message to the fourteenth session of the General Conference, in which he had expressed his belief that UNESCO could effectively supplement the efforts of the United Nations to contain and reduce the grave dangers inherent in the new weapons of mass destruction brought about by progress in science and technology. As a result of that statement, UNESCO's present activities included a number of studies and documents that were being prepared for publication as part of the organization's contribution to the special session. Other activities had been undertaken following the adoption by the General Conference at its nineteenth session of the medium-term plan for 1977-1982 and of a special resolution on the role of UNESCO in generating a climate of public opinion conducive to the halting of the arms race and the transition to disarmament.

24. In a special resolution on disarmament, the General Conference had noted that a series of obstacles to the strengthening of peace were presented by the continuing arms race and had concluded that UNESCO, by virtue of its experience and world-wide authority, could and should make an effective contribution to solving that vital problem. In addition, UNESCO had ongoing activities in its Division of Human Rights and Peace. Those activities could be divided into three

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groups: (a) studies and a seminar on the theme of obstacles to disarmament and the ways of overcoming them; (b) activities relating to disarmament education; (c) publications. The seminar on obstacles to disarmament was scheduled for early 1978 in time for the results to be made available to the special session. With regard to disarmament education, a world survey was being conducted with the assistance of non-governmental organizations in order to determine where and how disarmament was being taught in universities in the various member States. UNESCO planned to issue various publications in time for the special session. They included: a volume on the role of international organizations in reducing the arms race and promoting disarmament, which would be part of a series of teaching materials being prepared for university courses on international organization; a reader containing a selection of previously published scientific articles from different regional and disciplinary perspectives dealing with various historical efforts to achieve disarmament and with current social and economic aspects of disarmament; an annotated bibliography and report on the trends of research relating to the economic and social aspects of the arms race and disarmament.

25. In its work in the field of disarmament, UNESCO was of course guided by the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. It had the responsibility of advancing thought on the major problems of the day, developing school and out-of-school programmes aimed at furthering peace and international understanding, promoting the advancement of scientific knowledge and encouraging research designed to elucidate the conditions and principles governing international action to build peace. UNESCO remained ready to contribute in any way the Committee might find appropriate to the special session and in any way the General Assembly might wish to recommend with regard to the implementation of a programme of action in the field of disarmament.

26. Mr. COROIANU (Romania), introducing the working papers (A/AC.187/77, A/AC.187/78 and A/AC.187/79) prepared by his delegation, said that they were based on items 11 and 12 of the provisional agenda (Conference Room Paper No. 2/Rev.1), which had been adopted by the Committee in May for the special session; under those items it had been intended to adopt a declaration on disarmament, a programme of action on disarmament and a review of the role of the United Nations in disarmament and of the international machinery for negotiations on disarmament. Those were the subjects dealt with in the papers presented by his delegation, which he hoped would help to stimulate the work of the Preparatory Committee and assist in the process of drafting the documents needed for the special session. He wished to express his appreciation of the speedy way in which the Secretariat had produced the documents required for the Preparatory Committee.

27. Mr. GARCIA ROBLES (Mexico) said that he wished to inform members of the Preparatory Committee of the tentative conclusions reached by his delegation at the present stage concerning the preparation of the principal documents for the special session. Although it could not be expected that that task would begin before January, members might well consider the matter at the present stage. His proposal

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

was to have one final document divided into three or more sections or chapters. The first section would describe the situation in general terms, stating what had been achieved in disarmament efforts and reviewing the facts with regard to the destructive capacity of nuclear stockpiles and the astronomical sums spent yearly on armaments. It might be supplemented by some comparative data regarding disarmament and development. The second section should be shorter than the first and should explain the contents of the following two sections, which would contain a declaration of intent and a programme of action. The declaration should seek to define the principles and purposes of disarmament. It should be comprehensive in nature, containing the principles which should govern all negotiations and all disarmament activities, and the immediate and long-term purposes of such activities. The programme of action would not have to be so exhaustive. It should be based on a strict process of selection, not seeking to cover the rest of the century but looking some way beyond the disarmament decade. One of the first items in the programme should state that three years after the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in May or June 1981, a world disarmament conference should be held. If no such conference took place, a second special session on disarmament should be held. That special session would be devoted to studying the degree of compliance with the programme of action and to adopting measures for supplementing the programme. The programme would also provide that the General Assembly should have an item each year in the agenda for its regular session concerning compliance with the decisions of the special session of 1978. In that way, the peoples of the world would be fully aware that, while the programme of action was not in itself too ambitious, all possible measures had been adopted to keep the degree of compliance with the programme under constant review.

28. Another item required in the programme, to allow for regular oversight of disarmament activities, was a recommendation that the Ad Hoc Committee on the World Disarmament Conference, a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly established for the purpose or the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, with the alterations required to permit the participation of France and China, should be asked to prepare a comprehensive and exhaustive disarmament programme. That programme would cover the goals ahead up to the final goal of all disarmament negotiations, namely general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

29. The programme of action in the final document would be the result of careful selection and of consultations during the remaining proceedings of the Preparatory Committee. His delegation felt strongly that the final document must be a single unit, with close links among its constituent parts. It was, however, willing to consider any views that might be expressed by other members of the Committee.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

30. The CHAIRMAN, replying to a question by the representative of Iran, said that items 1 to 8 of the provisional agenda (Conference Room Paper No. 2/Rev.1) had been dealt with. There had been considerable progress as a result of the understandings reached during the informal meetings, which it had been possible to

(The Chairman)

formalize in the decisions taken at the meeting of the previous day. Those decisions appeared in Conference Room Paper No. 8, which was being distributed to members. Certain questions remained to be resolved. Consultations were in progress concerning the organization and duration of the special session and concerning its agenda. Following the suggestion made by the representative of Mexico at the previous meeting, consultations were also in progress concerning a possible new item, a report from the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, and at the suggestion of the representative of Poland it was also being discussed whether the Ad Hoc Committee on the World Disarmament Conference should be asked to submit a report. It was hoped that by the next day, or the next formal meeting, an understanding would have been reached on those questions and that a decision could be taken by consensus. It was also hoped that a consensus would be reached on the role of non-governmental organizations and the activities of OPI. The Secretariat had prepared papers on those two items. The Committee needed to give further attention to item 5, the matter of the principal documents for the special session. At the present session, the Committee would not deal with the question of drafting the principal documents, but a major step forward would have been taken if agreement could be reached on what those principal documents should be and how they should be arranged. It would also be advisable for the Committee to reach an understanding, whether at a formal or an informal meeting, as to how work would proceed during the intersessional period.

31. He suggested that the meeting on the following day should be an informal meeting during which members could freely exchange views on the remaining items. If agreement was reached, decisions could then be adopted at the next formal meeting. The informal meeting on the following day could be held in the morning, the next formal meeting being that of Tuesday, 6 September.

32. It was so decided.

33. In reply to a question by the representative of Sri Lanka, the CHAIRMAN said that during the informal meeting on the following day it should be possible to decide on the duration of the special session as well as the matter of reports from CCD and the Ad Hoc Committee. If members wished, they could also deal with the role of non-governmental organizations and the activities of OPI. The only pending item would then be that of the principal documents for the special session, and agreement would be required on their format.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.